

Winds of Change by NaturalAddict

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Angst with a Happy Ending, M/M, Post-Season/Series 02, The Whole Gang is Kinda There, Will needs love, and he gets it, angst (sorta), but they don't do anything

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Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

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Summary:

After all, there is a lot to be assimilated and the world is such a big place to a kid. No one wants to teach a little boy how it works. He will come to grips with it when he's older, make his own discoveries. There are people to guide him along - his mother, his brother. His father, too, at some point, he thinks, can't remember - but explaining things is ultimately a burden, and adults are amused by how much he doesn't understand.

Now he's older and is expected to know so much, to dismiss people who tell him otherwise, but he still feels like a little boy who has no clue why he can't wear a tutu to school if it makes him feel pretty.

Winds of Change

He is the first person that Mike tells. It's ironic in all the wrong ways, but it is what happens.

Will sits and listens as he talks, swallowing twice at the lump in his throat, unheeded.

The quiet whisper of Mike's voice carries a hushed reverence, like he's speaking of wonderful things. He says he has kissed Jane at the snow ball, and that it's weird because it felt like everyone was watching, but they weren't. That it's weird because he thought things would change in some great, exponential way, but they don't. Will thinks it's weird too, for a reason that he can't pinpoint. He wonders if his friend would have found it so weird and confusing if he had kissed him instead of Jane.

Maybe he is the weird one? Regardless, if things haven't changed by now, he expects that they will soon. They both do. They are both wrong.

Jane and Mike go from being friends that went through a lot together to friends who went through a lot together and shared a kiss once. She is still protective of him, especially when it comes to Max, but their bond doesn't grow, doesn't deepen, doesn't change. Which is not to say it's not still stronger than Will can feel comfortable with.

Their friendship is like some crystal or porcelain decorative trinket placed on a tall shelf, and it makes Will feel five again, looking up from a distance, the way things seem distant when you're little. When you're small. And he wants to touch it, to break it, to ruin it. Because maybe then he will understand its meaning and what makes it so precious in the first place.

He doesn't ruin it. And he doesn't understand.

This type of confusion should have been, would have been familiar. Before.

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place to a kid. No one wants to teach a little boy how it works. He will come to grips with it when he's older, make his own discoveries. There are people to guide him along - his mother, his brother. His father, too, at some point, he thinks, can't remember - but explaining things is ultimately a burden, and adults are amused by how much he doesn't understand.

Now he's older and is expected to know so much, to dismiss people who tell him otherwise, but he still feels like a little boy who has no clue why he can't wear a tutu to school if it makes him feel pretty.

Mike had helped him understand. Not the world, but himself, and he feels lost without him now, even more so because he is right there.

One of the most notable aspects of their little group not so long ago, what made Will feel safe, is how it never felt like Will and Mike, Lucas and Dustin. They had been one unit even when separated, and despite their individual preferences.

Now, it feels like they've retained that quality even with the addition of Jane and Max, but at the cost of expelling Will from the once so perfect circle. He knows he is the only one who feels this way, as invitations keep being extended to him no matter how many times he refuses, but it is perhaps that which is the root of the difference he feels now.

He is out of tune. Out of sync. He can tell what the others are thinking, but is hiding his own feelings from them in a way no one could ever have anticipated. At least, he certainly couldn't have.

It hurts, but not like a sharp punch or harsh words. It hurts like growing up. Sometimes that pain is all there is, and he thinks that is better than the jealousy. The anger.

It's hard not to blame Jane. She opened up the portal to the place where he had changed so much, to the point where he can't be an honest part of their group anymore. Or perhaps the problem is that he wasn't there when the others had gone through their own changes. They had all done so together. Jane had been there. Will hadn't. Which is okay in times of crisis. When he needs help, when the world is falling apart for all of them.

Yet, when normalcy sets back in and they are just people, just friends, when Mike kisses Jane, there is no place for him, despite him being the only one to notice.

He expects that things just carry on this way, that nothing changes drastically, and once again, he is wrong.

He can deal with the pain. He can't contain the anger. Not anymore.

It's not really noticeable at first, but Jane is slowly drawing Mike away from the group - quite literally. Every now and then, Will feels a burning stare on him, and shortly after his eyes make contact with Mike's, the other is being pulled away somewhere by her. The others claim to know what they are doing together, and they laugh, don't seem to mind, but Will can't stand the thought of them kissing again.

It's on one such occasion, during lunch period, that he goes after them. He has already lost so much by standing by and doing nothing, and he's so sick of hiding everything and whatever this costs, he is going to tell them what he thinks.

He finds Jane trying to push him into a broom closet in an empty corridor, and he roars, "No." The word is so cold and firmer than anything he's said in months, and both heads snap back to look at him. "Stop. You don't get to do that. He's my Mike."

"Oh." The other boy says, and it makes him think.

He didn't say *our* Mike. Our *friend*. Because he knows this is deeper than that. All three of them do. "I was here first."

"I know." Jane declares, turning to face him fully, and she is smiling, "I know," and pushing Mike gently in his direction. "That's what I've been trying to tell him."

"What?" He croaks out, confused and uncertain still, but for the first time, a little hopeful too.

Mike is blushing as he looks around. Will knows this is not fear. It is not shame. It's securing their safety. He wants to ask why, but the word dies in his throat when fingers curl into his shirt, and he is tugged closer, and their mouths collide.

Mike is kissing him. Jane is smiling. He closes his eyes, and the world disappears, but also feels much more solid under his shoes.

He can be a grown up, and still not understand the world. He can understand Mike, and Mike will again allow him to understand himself. The person's he's been, is and will be.

Maybe things have changed. Maybe they haven't. Maybe they will. Maybe, he doesn't know.

Finally, he can be a child, and not know.